

## Rep. Rahall Discusses Funding for Our National Parks

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Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman, I thank the distinguished ranking member of the Budget Committee for yielding me time.

Mr. Chairman, I do rise in strong opposition to this budget resolution for all the reasons that have already been said today, that will continue to be said this evening, that will be said all day tomorrow and into tomorrow night until the majority can get the necessary votes on their side of the aisle to jam it down our throats.

I want to highlight the negative impacts of the President's budget, as endorsed by this resolution, on the environmental and natural resources.

The President's budget for fiscal year 2007 provides funding for environmental programs which is 6.7 percent below the enacted level in fiscal year 2006.

That amounts to nearly a 10 percent cut below the level necessary to maintain current services at the EPA, the Department of the Interior, and other resource management agencies.

And to add insult to injury, these cuts would come on top of the previous years of stagnant funding under this administration for these vital domestic programs.

I also serve on the Transportation Committee, and let me briefly highlight one of the impacts of this budget on the EPA. Across the Nation, there is a vast array of unmet clean water and safe drinking water infrastructure needs here in America. Yet the President's budget for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund calls for a

22.4 percent cut from the 2006 enacted level. If enacted, that would represent nearly a 50 percent decrease since 2004.

Whether it is in my district in southern West Virginia or any other Member's district in this country, it is obvious that we need to do more to ensure clean water and improve public health. Yet this budget disregards those obligations to the American people and falsely says, in effect, Mission Accomplished.

The inadequacies of the President's budget are equally detrimental to the programs administered by the Department of the Interior and other agencies under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Resources.

The vast majority of Americans treasure our national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges and public lands. Along with the oceans, Great Lakes and inland waterways, they not only provide habitat for fish and wildlife, but they are economic engines as well for adjacent cities and communities.

Yet this constricted budget not only neglects to improve and enhance this vast array of vital resources and national assets; it fails to even maintain the status quo. For example, the administration is so desperate for revenue gimmicks that it has resorted to proposing to sell off our national forests and public lands in order to fund rural schools.

Instead of selling public lands to special interests, what Congress should be doing is increasing funding for critical programs such as the popular Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The administration proposes to effectively dismantle the stateside grant program and provide only \$91 million, the lowest amount in more than 30 years, for Federal land acquisition under the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

In effect, this would deprive State and local governments of badly needed funding for local parks and recreation and would further undercut efforts to acquire new lands to enhance our national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges.

Ironically, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has an unspent surplus on the books in the Treasury of over \$14 billion, and the authorized annual spending limit is \$900 million.

The purpose of the fund is to dedicate a small fraction of the enormous revenues generated by drilling offshore on the Outer Continental Shelf to the conservation of our resources. Yet this flawed budget, to put it politely, breaks that promise to the American people and disregards the conservation needs of this Nation.

Mr. Chairman, in the budget reconciliation legislation last year, the Republican majority on the Committee on Resources proposed to expand drilling in Federal waters offshore coastal States. That proposal, along with other controversial measures to open up ANWR and sell off public lands to mining companies, were all stripped from the legislation prior to enactment. Fortunately, perhaps in light of that experience, the Budget Committee has not included any instructions to Resources in this resolution.

But there are legislative proposals pending before the Resources Committee that would seek to undercut the offshore oil and gas drilling moratoria restrictions and expand drilling off the coast of Florida and elsewhere. In fact, these proposals would seek to offer incentives to approve States to approve drilling based on sharing of revenues which would otherwise accrue to the Federal Treasury and to the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

But before Congress proceeds to consider opening wide swaths of protected coastal waters to the oil and gas industry, we should carefully evaluate the budgetary aspects of the current drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere.

The failure to adequately appropriate the current Land and Water Conservation Fund surplus is one problem with the current system, but the broader problem is a failure to collect the Treasury's fair share of the value of the oil and gas produced on public lands and offshore.

At a time of high prices and record oil and gas company profit, it is an outrage, let me repeat, simply an outrage that companies are avoiding paying the 12 to 16 percent royalty on oil and gas that they extract from public lands and waters. In part, the underpayments are an administrative problem as the agencies have failed to aggressively audit the industry; but Congress also shares the blame for enacting unwarranted royalty relief, first in 1995 and again in 2005, in the Energy Policy Act.

Of all the industries seeking relief from their obligations to pay for the privilege of profiting from the extraction of publicly owned resources, I can think of none less deserving than the oil and gas industry in the current high price and record profit environment in which they thrive. Yet it is this politically powerful industry that the Congress has

avored time and again with unwarranted subsidies.

According to an investigation by the New York Times and a recent GAO draft report, the costs of royalty relief to the Treasury are staggering. Over the next 5 years, the cost to the Federal Government will be at least \$7 billion in lost revenues and more than \$28 billion if the industry is successful in a pending legal challenge.

And GAO estimates that the losses to the Treasury could range over the next 25 years from at least \$20 billion to as much as \$80 billion, depending on the outcome of industry litigation.

Mr. Chairman, if the Republican majority were serious about the deficit, it would put a halt to the royalty relief outrage, but this budget resolution is the worst of both worlds. It does nothing to improve the collection of revenues from the extraction of resources on public lands and at the same time it puts a fiscal squeeze on funding vital environmental programs that cannot effectively function if cut further.